



The Virginia Saltwater Review

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by

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OVERVIEW

It's definitely fall. Temperatures are on the decline and the winds have been more up than down, but the bite is still on for some of our favorites! Striped bass are a frequent topic of conversation these days, with the season that opened October 4th in the Chesapeake Bay to much anticipation. How the 2008 Bay season will end is still up for debate, but not for much longer, as the Commission will be holding the public hearing on this issue next Tuesday, October 28th. We will update everyone on the outcome of that meeting in the next edition of The Saltwater Review, due out Friday, November 7th.

Other than striped bass, there are many of species up for grabs. Flounder, spot, speckled trout, and red drum (big and small) are still making news, and the offshore action for tuna and many other species is still note worthy. Though the number of contributors to the Saltwater Review declines during the fall, there plenty of fishing information to be found.

A special note for those looking ahead at the 2009 fishing year. The 3rd Annual Black Drum World Championship Fishing Tournament will once again be held in Cape Charles, Virginia at Bay Creek Marina. The Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce has provided some tournament specifics for next year exclusively to the Saltwater Review this week. The tournament weekend will be May 15 through 17, 2009. Unlike this past year, registration will be accepted until 5pm, May 15, just prior to the Captain's meeting. There will be a price discount for those that pre-register though. The tournament will once again feature a Conservation Tagging Division, sponsored by the Virginia Marine Resources Commission, and separate from the big-fish competition. After a 1-year hiatus, the tagging seminar will return to the tournament, preceding the Captain's meeting, so that all participants that want to also take part in the tagging for conservation can join in! More details will be announced in the upcoming months (<http://www.esvachamber.org/>), but mark your calendars and join the VMRC Biological Sampling Team at the 2009 Black Drum World Championship Fishing Tournament May 15-17, 2009. (See page 6 for the age and weights of the 2008 tournament catch of black drum).

And now, the fishing reports!

THE FISHING REPORT

Chincoteague

According to Donna at Captain Bob's, fishing has been slow out of Chincoteague. Windy conditions kept fishing at a minimum over the past few weeks. On the good nights, a few large striped bass were caught under the Queen's Sound Bridge.

Cape Charles

Speckled trout were showing up around Fisherman's Island in an area named the Road Bed, according to staff at Chris' Bait and Tackle. Plantation and Cherrystone creeks were very productive as well. Puppy drum (juvenile red drum) could be found in the same areas. The flounder bite was good north of Cape Charles between Buoys 36 and 38. Tautog action was hot by the Concrete Ships and the 3rd and 4th islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, and striped bass are doing well in the same areas.

Wachapreague

At Captain Zed's, anglers were looking for flounder, but found very few keepers. From the dock at Wachapreague, bluefish, spot, and croaker were landed. Offshore, there was little action. One citation black sea bass (5 pounds, 2 ounces) was reported from the wrecks.

Onancock

In Onancock, Captain Wil reported catches of legal-sized striped bass in the creeks. A few keeper flounder have been reported as well.

Lower Bay/Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel

According to staff at the Sunset Boating Center, anglers were catching spot and flounder. Spot were found by the Hampton Bar and flounder by the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel. One citation red drum (66 pounds, 52 inches) was caught at the 3rd island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel this week.

Anglers are catching spot, striped bass, and speckled trout near Salt Ponds Marina. Poor weather has kept fishing slow recently.

Staff at the York River Fishing Center report fishing has been slow for the past few weeks due to weather. Anglers were catching small speckled trout off of Gloucester Point Pier. Small striped bass were found in the shallows, along with plenty of puppy drum (juvenile red drum) around in the shallow grass as well.

Ken Neill, reporting secretary for the Peninsula Anglers Club, contributed the following:

Wind, wind, wind. Tough conditions have put a limit on fishing activities, and anglers have concentrated on inshore opportunities. Speckled trout action has been very good in all of the speckled trout areas. The Hot Ditch area of the Elizabeth River has been very good. Large speckled trout are also being caught inside of Back River, on Poquoson Flats (when the wind allows), in the York River, and inside Lynnhaven and Rudee inlets. There are plenty of puppy drum (juvenile red drum) around. They are being caught almost everywhere in the shallows. Inside Lynnhaven Inlet has been very good. Striped

bass are being caught at all of the area bridges and off of docks with lights on them. The Monitor Merrimac Bridge Tunnel and the James River Bridge are both producing good catches of small striped bass. Colder weather up north should be sending us some larger striped bass our way soon. Small bluefish are everywhere and are being caught by anglers targeting rockfish at the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. The flounder bite has been sporadic when anglers have been able to target them. Some keepers have been caught at the 36A buoy, the Baltimore Channel near the mouth of the bay, and around some of the ocean wrecks. The Tower Reef, Brass Spike, and Triangle wrecks are good fall flounder spots. The run of big spot just never developed. There have been plenty of ½-pound spot around though just this week, spot pushing 2 pounds have been hauled from area pound nets. When weather has allowed, anglers hitting the coastal wrecks have found sea bass, triggerfish, and bluefish. Some of the bluefish have been larger class. Anglers trolling spoons around the wrecks for king mackerel have caught false albacore. Before the most recent blow, fishermen making it out to the Norfolk and Washington canyons experienced very good dolphin and wahoo fishing with decent numbers of white marlin showing up. Since then, water temperatures have dropped a lot. It will be a different world when we can get back out there again. Boats who have found weather windows to get out of Oregon Inlet have made decent catches of yellowfin and blackfin tuna. King mackerel have made a good showing out of both Oregon and Hatteras inlets.

Dr. Julie Ball, IGFA International Representative for Virginia Beach, contributed the following:

Although blustery weather is not allowing much opportunity for fishing on the open water, not many anglers are complaining since sheltered water is providing impressive speckled trout action. Plenty of fish averaging to three pounds are keeping casters busy. The most consistent speck action is happening in Rudee Inlet, Little Creek, Lynnhaven River, Back River, the Eastern Shore shallows, the Poquoson flats, and the Elizabeth River. Todd at Bayside Bait and Tackle reports that anglers are lining the beach in front of the old Duck Inn near the Lesner Bridge and leaving with buckets full of keeper specks, just like the “old days.” The best lures are chartreuse or red and white Mirrolures. Smoke-colored grubs and Gulp grubs are also producing.

Spot reports are scarce, with the great bite of the last few weeks dwindling to almost nil within the lower Bay inlets. Croaker catches are also slowing, but a few big headheads are still providing some action in Lynnhaven Inlet, Rudee Inlet, and near the lower Bay Bridge Tunnels. Puppy drum (juvenile red drum) are still generating a stir in the backwater areas, where hopeful die-hard spot anglers are scoring with nice pups in the 5- to 12-pound range in both Lynnhaven and Rudee Inlets. Surf anglers are also experiencing good puppy drum encounters on cut bait from Fort Story to Sandbridge.

Although this season’s king mackerel run was a good one, the recent string of blows has dropped water temperatures into the upper 60’s, which may have cut the run short. The same goes for cobia. The king bite out of Carolina is fantastic lately though, with several boats reporting limits of kings each day. Big red drum are still a possibility along the ocean front, along the Eastern Shore shoals, and near the 3rd island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. The bull red action off the Little Island Fishing Pier and the surf line slowed up this week.

Striped bass are becoming more active, but not much bigger...yet. But, since the water temperatures are finally beginning to drop, bigger fish should begin moving in soon. Chunking and live baiting is still your best bet for a larger class of fish. Casters are scoring with schoolie-sized rockfish between 20 to 22

inches along the Monitor Merrimack, the James River Bridge, the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel, and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, especially during night time hours. Wire liners are also boating fish ranging from 24 to 26 inches from the tubes of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel this week. Lots of bluefish up to 5 pounds and small grey tout are rounding out most catches.

Flounder are scarce with the muddy water right now. Drifting strip baits along the Baltimore Channel, near buoy 36A, along Cape Henry, and the small boat channel are good places to try when the wind breaks. Working bait and jigs around the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel structure can also prove effective for big flatties. These fish are fat in preparation for their migration offshore.

The inshore and bay tautog bite is beginning to draw more interest as reports of keeper fish up to 8 pounds are trickling in. Several keepers were boated from around the artificial islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel this week on blue crab. Wreck action is also taking off nicely with ample numbers of respectable sea bass in the 3- to 5-pound range becoming active on both inshore and offshore wrecks, with trigger fish still available in the same areas. Chopper bluefish are circling offshore structures. Captain Skip Feller of Virginia Beach landed the new State Leading bluefish. His fish tipped the scale at 19-pounds, 15-ounces. Also look for a possible bluefin tuna sighting to surface soon in these same areas.

Offshore, it has been difficult to get out due to weather. When boats could make it to the deep, wahoo were providing some action, along with a few bill fish and bailer dolphin. This line-up can change considerably since the good water has moved out. Once overnight trips resume, more swordfish are a good possibility.

Virginia Middle Bay

According to Roger at Jett's Hardware, the fish of the week from is striped bass. Because bluefish have begun their move out of the area, anglers can now keep their baits in the water long enough to hook one of these prized fish. Due to popularity of stripers, no one is really fishing for anything else, but you can expect the bottom fish, such as spot, to be lurking around if that is more to your fancy.

Smith's Point Marina has seen a lot of wind the past few days, so they can not say for certain the striped bass are out there, but it's pretty safe to say that they are. Just pay attention to the weather forecast and remember that striped bass seem to bite a little better on the marginal weather days.

Capt. Jim reports the fishing this week was on a scale from great to good. White Stone had the largest fish by far, but the fishing was slow in that area. Sturgeon Bar was a productive area during the flood tide, and while they were numerous, the fish were small. No striped bass were found at Butlers Hole last week. In the Rappahannock, the Spike was great on flood tide one day and blank the next. The fish ranged in size from large to very small. In the Bay, off Gwynn's Island, it was the same. Deep Rock was the best area to fish in the Bay. Other catches included mullet and trout. Bluefish were everywhere, and the striped bass were plentiful at White Stone in the Rappahannock River.

Virginia Beach

At the Virginia Beach Fishing Center, staff reported catches of spot and speckled trout in the inlet. Offshore boats have had luck with yellowfin tuna, and inshore, large bluefish were caught. This week, Skip Feller landed

an enormous 19-pound, 15-ounce bluefish. A few small striped bass were spotted as well.

Virginia Piers

At the Ocean View Pier, anglers were hooking primarily puppy drum (juvenile red drum). A few spot, bluefish, and flounder were also reported.

At the Virginia Beach Pier, puppy drum, sea mullet, and spot were reported. Large spot were consistent over the past few weeks.

Slow fishing was reported at the Sandbridge Pier. Spot and puppy drum (juvenile red drum) were the most notable catches.

Outer Banks, NC

It's officially fall, and the accompanying cold fronts have done their job in lowering the water temperatures into the upper sixties along the surf. However, along with the cold fronts, one can expect a fair amount of wind as well, so anglers have to pick and choose their days to fish. Overall, the fishing has been good and can be expected to get better as the water temperatures continue to drop.

Those fishing offshore out of the Nags Head area can expect to see a large variety of species to be available including large yellowfin tuna, wahoo, king mackerel, dolphin, and amberjack. Deep water bottom fishing has been producing assorted snappers, groupers, and tilefish. Anglers fishing a little closer to shore were not having much luck with the striped bass. Spanish mackerel and bluefish were found just outside the breakers from boats, piers, and the shore. Croaker, spot, trout, sea mullet, sheepshead, and red drum were also available, albeit in lower numbers. In the sounds and bays, striped bass are biting strong, and speckled trout, gray trout, and red drum could be found.

South of Oregon Inlet, a few red drum were landed around the Avon Pier and the Point. Bluefish could be found everywhere, and few flounder, sea mullet, croaker, and spot were eating live and cut bait. Pay attention to the weather forecasts, as you could find that lure you just threw heading back towards you due to the wind.

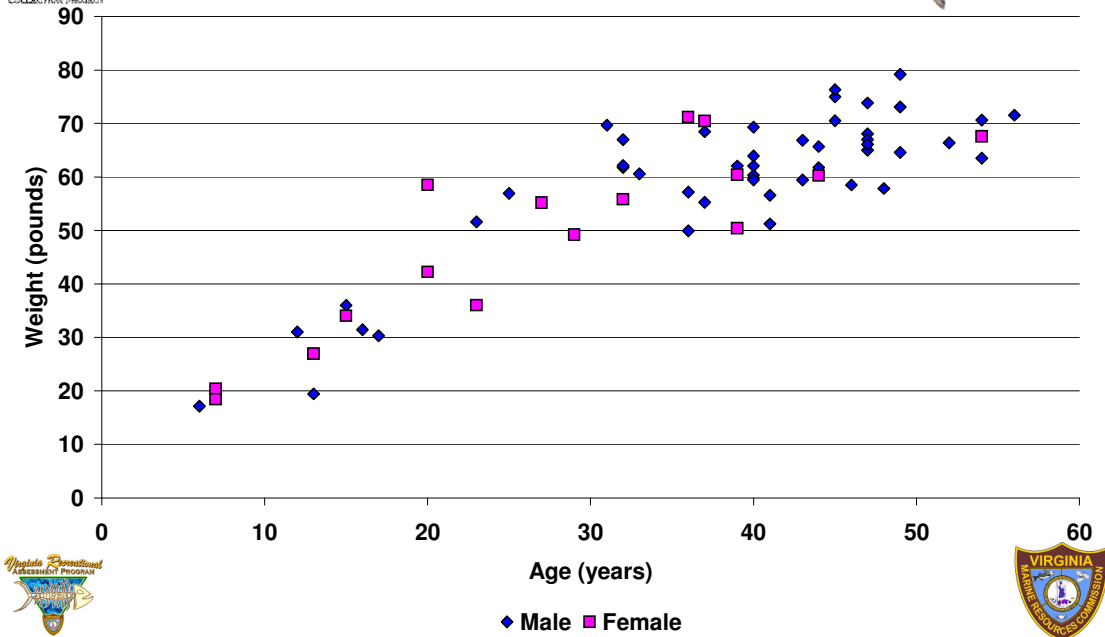
Offshore fishing out of Hatteras was hit and miss with the weather, but when anglers could get out, there were plenty of dolphin to be found. Scattered king mackerel and blackfin tuna graced the lines of a few lucky anglers as well. In the sound behind Hatteras, some red drum and speckled trout were around.

If you have additional information or would like further details contact Joe Grist at (757) 247-2237.

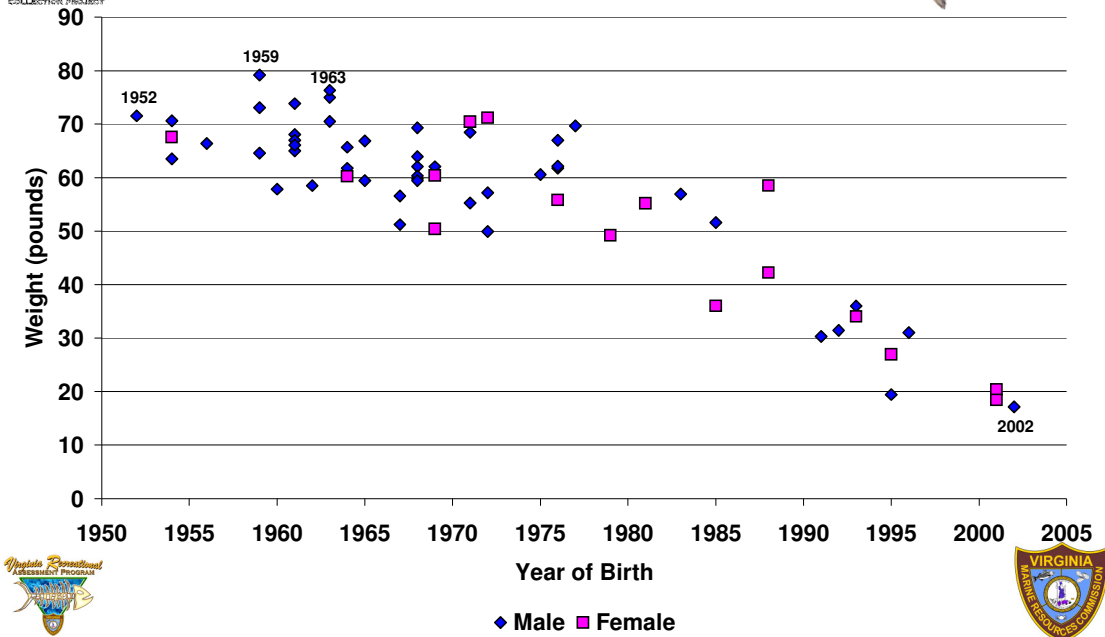
Please credit the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's [THE SALTWATER REVIEW](http://mrc.virginia.gov/swr/saltwaterreview.shtm) as the source of the fishing information.



2008 Eastern Shore of Virginia Black Drum Tournament Black Drum Weight-at-Age



2008 Eastern Shore of Virginia Black Drum Tournament Black Drum Weight-at-Age (Year of Birth)



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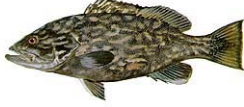



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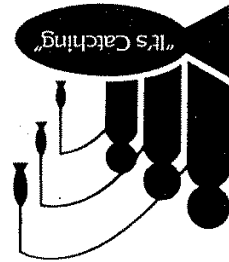
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